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ABSTRACT

Competent listeners possess the knowledge and ability to listen, the positive attitudes and desire to listen, and the willingness to apply the ability and desire to listen. Having only one or two of these ingredients ensures ineffective listening. One common negative listening attitude is self-centeredness, as opposed to being other-oriented. The other-oriented listener has a genuine interest in others and acknowledges the other person's comments by asking open-ended questions that begin with what, who, when, where, and how. A second common negative listening attitude is disrespect, shown by sending impatient signals, sending superiority signals, interrupting, and so forth. Teachers should engage students in a number of activities that encourage positive listening attitudes and listening competency. Such activities have been incorporated into Maryland's Listening Curriculum Framework--a curriculum to help students to understand and use the stages of the listening process, to listen for a variety of purposes, and to develop a positive attitude toward listening. (A compilation of listening skills/behaviors and sample activities from the Maryland Listening Framework are appended.) (HOD)

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LISTENING COMPETENCIES AT THE SECONDARY/POST-SECONDARY LEVEL

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According to most communication theorists, listening competency--or listening effectiveness--consists of two ingredients.

The first of these ingredients is knowledge--

--knowledge of the communication process,

--knowledge of the listening process,

--knowledge of self as a communicator, and

--knowledge of effective listening skills and behaviors. Knowledge about these aspects provides the listener with the ability to be a competent listener.

For a moment, let's examine the fourth knowledge aspect--knowledge of effective listening skills and behaviors. A review of listening literature and various states' listening curricula reveals that a wide diversity of listening skills has been identified. This diversity can readily be seen when we look at the list of skills/ behaviors that I have compiled from just four sources. (See pages 1-3 of Appendix.)

A more specific illustration of the diversity of listening skills selected can be found when we examine the skills selected by state curriculum specialists. Of the 19 states that had identified listening skills as of August, 1983, no two states had selected identical skills.

Two major reasons for this diversity are (1) listening researchers, listening instructors, and curriculum specialists have used a variety of processes by which they have selected listening skills and (2) the very nature of

listening may impede the compiling of a definitive list of listening skills.

The first of these two reasons can be--and should be--seriously addressed. Rather than basing their skill-selection process upon "expert" opinion, surveys of reading tests and listening-related literature, and arbitrary judgment, listening researchers, listening instructors, and curriculum specialists should base their skill-selection process on systematic research--as too few have done.

The second of these two reasons, however, may be a viable reason for the diversity of listening skills. Many listening scholars contend that while the process of listening remains the same whenever one listens, the purposes for which one listens differ. Thus, as one engages in various listening purposes, one must apply a wide variety of listening skills. This view, then, may provide a reasonable explanation for the multitude of listening skills found in listening literature.

In addition to including knowledge as a component of listening competency, most communication theorists include a second ingredient--application. That is, the competent listener applies his/her acquired knowledge of the communication process, the listening process, self as a communicator, and effective listening skills/behaviors each time he/she functions as a listener.

Thus, most communication theorists contend that listening competency is acheived by both knowing and doing.

I believe that there is another ingredient to competent listening. This ingredient is attitudes--positive attitudes toward

--listening,

--its importance,

--its rewards,

--self as a listener, and

--all other communicators in each communication transaction.

Having the knowledge is meaningless unless listeners combine that knowledge--that ability--with a willingness--a desire--to listen. Both this ability and this desire must be applied each time one functions as a listener if one is to be a competent listener.

The ingredients of a competent listener, then, are that of

--can do--having the knowledge/ability to listen,

--want to--having positive attitudes/the desire to listen, and

--do--applying ability and desire. These ingredients are summarized in this quote: We do what we can do and want to--we listen.

Having only one or two of these ingredients ensures ineffective listening. For example, one may have the desire to listen, but if one engages in listening behavior without knowing workable listening skills, the result will be ineffective listening. Or, one may know workable

listening skills, but if one does not apply them in a listening situation, the result will be ineffective listening. Only when all ingredients overlap can we have effective, competent listening. (See p. 4 of Appendix.)

These three ingredients are incorporated in the Maryland Listening Curriculum Framework, a framework that Andrew Wolvin and I helped to develop over a 3-year period. Now in its final draft form, this framework (page 5 of Appendix) contains three goals: goals 1 and 2 pertain to knowledge and application, and goal 3 pertains to attitudes and application.

Numerous listening resources provide background information and related activities that one can use to develop listening skills/behaviors. However, few resources contain information on how to encourage positive listening attitudes. During my remaining time, I would like to share some background information and activities that one might use to encourage two positive listening attitudes.

One negative listening attitude that many listeners have is that of being self-centered. Self-centered listeners are more concerned with themselves than they are with others. They really don't want to listen; they would rather talk--about anything but mainly about themselves--their accomplishments, their views, their feelings, their needs, and so forth. Their favorite words seem to be I, me, my, and mine. Their favorite voices seem to be their own.

If you observe any informal conversation between people,

you will probably note that most people do not really want to listen to others--except to look for an opening for their own ideas. Person A just waits for Person B to stop talking so that Person A can talk. And, then, Person B does the same. The typical conversation consists of "swapping fish stories"; that is, each person is more concerned with telling his/her own story than he/she is in listening to the other person's story. Often, the communicators engage in one-upmanship; each attempts to "outdo" the other by telling a story that is more tragic, more humorous, more embarrassing, etc. I'm confident that you know people who fit this description.

The counterpart of this negative listening attitude is being other-oriented. The other-oriented listener has a genuine interest in others and an inquisitive attitude toward others.

Being other-oriented does not mean that one should not talk about him/herself. But, it does mean that one should first fully acknowledge the other person's comments. One way to acknowledge the other person's comments is to ask questions--open-ended questions that begin with what, who, when, where, and how. One can ask for more background information, more description, more feelings, more reactions.

In order to develop an other-oriented attitude, we must suppress our desire to talk. We must, as Lyman Steil notes, stop humming that special song--the one that contains these

words: "There will never be another me." We must realize that everyone else we meet is also humming this same song. To become other-oriented, each of us must put our song out of mind and develop a genuine desire to listen to others hum their songs.

An activity that you might have your students engage in in order for them to apply this positive listening attitude is explained on pages 6-7 in the Appendix. Please note under 3C that this activity also incorporates two listening behaviors--the overt demonstration of attending behaviors and the covert use of concentration techniques. Thus, you should also provide instruction in these two skills before students engage in this activity.

A second negative listening attitude is that of being disrespectful. There are many ways that we show this disrespectful attitude when we serve as listeners:

--we send impatient signals,

--we send superiority signals,

--we send signals that we are close-minded--unwilling to listen, and

--we send numerous other disrespectful signals.

Perhaps, though, the most common way that listeners display disrespect is through the act of interrupting. While we would doubtless agree that interrupting is rude and insensitive, most of us have been guilty of interrupting others--

--to help them tell their jokes,

--to supply words for which they are grasping,

--to correct them,

--to ask them questions before they have completed their messages,

--to keep them from saying too much,

--to disagree with them before we have completely heard them ("I understand, but...."), and so on.

Regardless of the reason for interrupting, interrupting conveys disregard for and rejection of the speaker and/or what the speaker has to say. And, interrupting evokes interpersonal resentment.

Effective listeners do not interrupt speakers. Rather, they respectfully observe turn-taking signals. That is, they wait their turns to speak.

An activity that you might have your students engage in in order for them to become more aware of the effects of interrupting is explained on page 8 of the Appendix. You will note under 2B that in this activity, the female is to serve as the interrupter. The reason for this is that the results of a study conducted by West and Zimmerman shows that in male-female transactions, males account for 96 percent of the interruptions. Thus, this exercise is primarily geared to increase males' awareness of the negative effects of interrupting.

Being other-oriented and being respectful are only two of the many positive listening attitudes that a competent listener should possess. I wish I had time to discuss others, but, unfortunately, I don't.

According to my original, this last line is on p. 8.

others, but, unfortunately, I don't.

One of my major goals today has been to stress the important role that attitudes should play in any listening improvement program. I sincerely hope that you now share my view that listening competency includes not just two ingredients--knowing and doing, but rather listening competency includes three ingredients--

knowing,

wanting,

and

doing.

APPENDIX

A COMPILATION OF LISTENING SKILLS/BEHAVIORS LISTED IN FOUR SOURCES*

DETERMINE ONE'S PURPOSE FOR LISTENING.
IDENTIFY SPEAKER'S PURPOSE.
REMAIN AWARE OF PERSONAL MOTIVATION FOR LISTENING.
IDENTIFY MAIN IDEAS AND SUPPORTING IDEAS AND DETERMINE THEIR INTERRELATIONSHIPS.
RECOGNIZE SPEAKER INFERENCES.
MAKE VALID INFERENCES.
GET THE CENTRAL THEME.
RETAIN PERTINENT CONTENT.
PERCEIVE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SIMILARLY WORDED STATEMENTS.
IDENTIFY CORRECT ENGLISH USAGE.
USE CONTEXTUAL CLUES TO DETERMINE "WORD MEANINGS."
COMPREHEND ORAL INSTRUCTIONS.
FOLLOW ORAL DIRECTIONS.
NOTE DETAILS ACCURATELY.
DISTINGUISH WELL-SUPPORTED STATEMENTS FROM IRRELEVANT ONES AND EVALUATE THEM.
LISTEN TO DIFFICULT MATERIAL.
ADJUST TO THE SPEAKER.
LISTEN UNDER BAD CONDITIONS.
RESIST THE INFLUENCE OF EMOTION-LADEN WORDS AND ARGUMENTS.
TAKE NOTES.
KEEP TRACK OF MAIN POINTS BY NOTETAKING OR MENTAL RECAPITULATION AS THE TALK PROCEEDS.
USE A STUDY GUIDE OR OUTLINE WHEN PROVIDED.
DETERMINE THE SPEAKER'S PLAN OF ORGANIZATION.
IMPOSE STRUCTURE ON A SPEECH.
DETECT TRANSITIONAL OR SIGNAL WORDS AND PHRASES.
PREVENT FACTS FROM INTERFERING WITH OBTAINING THE MAIN IDEA.
IMPROVE CONCENTRATION BY USE OF SPECIAL TECHNIQUES.
HEAR THE SPEAKER'S WORDS.
DEVELOP CURIOSITY.
JUDGE VALIDITY AND ADEQUACY OF MAIN IDEAS, ARGUMENTS, HYPOTHESES.
REMEMBER SIGNIFICANT DETAILS ACCURATELY.
LISTEN FOR IMPLICATIONS OF SIGNIFICANT DETAILS.
LISTEN FOR IMPLICATIONS OF MAIN IDEAS.
PARAPHRASE A SPEAKER'S MESSAGE.
LISTEN, APPLY, AND PLAN ACTION.

LISTEN, IMAGINE, AND EXTEND FOR ENJOYMENT AND EMOTIONAL RESPONSE.

EVALUATE THE QUALIFICATIONS OF THE SPEAKER.

EVALUATE FALLACIES.

RELATE A SPEAKER'S IDEAS AND INFORMATION TO ONE'S OWN LIFE AND INTERESTS.

IDENTIFY CAUSE AND EFFECT RELATIONSHIPS.

IDENTIFY THE MOST APPROPRIATE SUMMARY OF A SELECTION PRESENTED ORALLY.

ASK ONE'S OWN PERSONAL QUESTIONS (MENTALLY OR ON PAPER) AS THE TALK PROCEEDS.

LISTEN, ANSWER, AND FORMULATE SIMPLE QUESTIONS.

DISTINGUISH BETWEEN RELEVANT AND IRRELEVANT MATERIAL.

RECOGNIZE TOPIC SENTENCES AND ASSOCIATE EACH TOPIC SENTENCE WITH SOME PREVIOUS BIT OF KNOWLEDGE.

CONNECT SPOKEN MATERIAL WITH PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE.

RECOGNIZE WHAT THE SPEAKER WANTS THE LISTENER TO DO.

UNDERSTAND HOW WORDS CAN CREATE A MOOD.

UNDERSTAND CONNOTATIVE MEANINGS.

PREDICT WHAT WILL HAPPEN NEXT.

PREDICT OUTCOME OF A TALK.

UNDERSTAND DENOTATIVE MEANINGS.

IDENTIFY SPEAKER ATTITUDES.

DETECT SPEAKER BIAS, PREJUDICE, AND POINT OF VIEW.

GET MEANING FROM IMAGERY.

FOLLOW SEQUENCE OF IDEAS AND DETAILS.

REMEMBER SIMPLE SEQUENCES OF WORDS AND IDEAS.

CHECK FOR THE ACCURACY OF NEW INFORMATION.

DISTINGUISH BETWEEN OLD AND NEW MATERIAL.

AVOID THE EFFECTS OF PROJECTION.

EVALUATE AND APPLY MATERIAL PRESENTED.

INTROSPECT AND ANALYZE ONE'S OWN LISTENING DISABILITIES.

JUDGE VALIDITY AND ADEQUACY OF MAIN IDEAS.

DISCRIMINATE BETWEEN FACT AND OPINION.

JUDGE WHETHER THE SPEAKER HAS ACCOMPLISHED HIS/HER PURPOSE.

RECOGNIZE THE SELF-CONTRADICTIONS BY THE SPEAKER.

RECOGNIZE AND JUDGE PERSUASIVE DEVICES USED BY THE SPEAKER.

NOTE EMOTIONAL APPEALS.

DRAW CONCLUSIONS FROM THE TALK.

SUMMARIZE THE SPEAKER'S MAIN POINTS (MENTALLY OR ON PAPER).

*This compiled list comes from the following four sources:

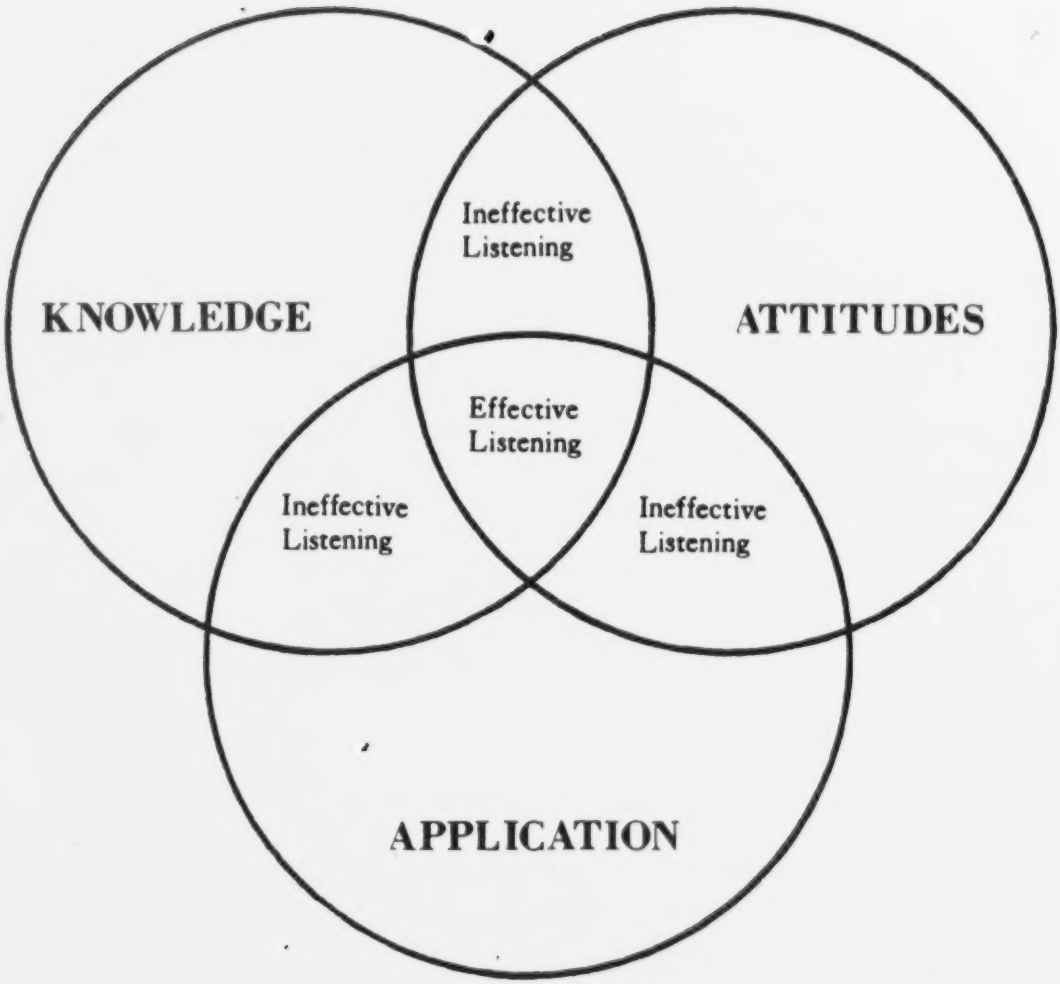
Devine, T.G. Listening skills schoolwide: activities and programs. Urbana, IL: NCTE/ERIC, 1982, 5.

Lundsteen, S.W. Listening: its impact on reading and the other language arts. Urbana, IL: NCTE/ERIC, 1971, 52-53.

Michigan State Department of Education. MEAP minimal performance objectives. MI: Michigan Department of Education, 1981.

Weaver, C.H. Human listening: processes and behavior. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1972, 10-11.

INGREDIENTS OF EFFECTIVE LISTENING



MARYLAND'S LISTENING CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

LISTENING IS A PROCESS OF RECEIVING, FOCUSING ON, ASSIGNING MEANING TO, AND REMEMBERING AURAL AND ACCOMPANYING VISUAL MESSAGES. EFFECTIVE LISTENING REQUIRES THE DEVELOPMENT OF APPROPRIATE KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES, AND BEHAVIORS FOR A VARIETY OF PURPOSES AND SITUATIONS--LISTENING TO ONESELF, TO AN INDIVIDUAL IN A CONVERSATION OR A GROUP DISCUSSION, TO A PUBLIC SPEAKER, OR TO A SPEAKER IN THE MASS MEDIA.

TO COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY, STUDENTS SHOULD BE ABLE TO:

GOAL 1: UNDERSTAND AND USE THE STAGES OF THE LISTENING PROCESS.

SUBGOALS:

1. DETERMINE PURPOSES FOR SPECIFIC LISTENING SITUATIONS.
2. RECEIVE AND DISCRIMINATE AMONG AURAL AND ACCOMPANYING VISUAL MESSAGES.
3. FOCUS ON THE LISTENING TASK.
4. ASSIGN MEANING TO THE MESSAGE RECEIVED.
5. USE SELF-MONITORING TECHNIQUES TO ASSESS LISTENING EFFECTIVENESS.

GOAL 2: LISTEN FOR A VARIETY OF PURPOSES.

SUBGOALS:

1. LISTEN TO COMPREHEND THE CONTENT OF MESSAGES AND INTENT OF SPEAKERS.
2. LISTEN EMPATHETICALLY TO HELP SPEAKERS CLARIFY THEIR THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS.
3. LISTEN CRITICALLY TO EVALUATE THE VALIDITY OF A MESSAGE AND THE CREDIBILITY OF THE SENDER.
4. LISTEN FOR RECREATION AND FOR AESTHETIC PLEASURE.

GOAL 3: DEVELOP A POSITIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD LISTENING.

SUBGOALS:

1. DEVELOP A WILLINGNESS TO LISTEN ACTIVELY, OPENLY, AND RESPONSIBLY.
2. DEVELOP A CURIOSITY ABOUT AND INTEREST IN LISTENING TO A VARIETY OF TOPICS AND PEOPLE.
3. VALUE THE SIGNIFICANT ROLE OF LISTENING IN HUMAN EXPERIENCES.

Draft 1985

FOCUSING ON THE SPEAKER

PURPOSE: To increase each listener's awareness of the need to acknowledge more fully a speaker's comments and to ask for further discussion before the listener focuses the conversation back on him/herself

PROCEDURE:

1. Participants complete the attached sheet entitled "Focusing on the Speaker."
2. Participants form dyads.
3. The facilitator explains Round 1 of the activity.

   ROUND 1

   A. Each partnership determines who will serve as speaker and who will serve as listener. (The facilitator may have the partner whose birthday is closer to today's date serve as listener.)

   B. The speaker will have 3 minutes to discuss what he/she has ranked as #3 on the "Focusing on the Speaker" sheet.

   C. The listener will have the responsibility to initiate the conversation and to encourage the speaker to continue speaking. To assist the speaker in fully expressing him/herself, the listener will engage in three acts:
      (1) Attending behaviors
      (2) Question-asking
      (3) Concentration techniques

      At no time shall the listener shift the focus of the discussion back on him/herself.

4. The facilitator stops the discussion after 3 minutes.
5. The facilitator explains Round 2 of the activity.

   ROUND 2

   A. Partners will reverse roles with each former speaker becoming a listener and vice versa.

   B. Each new speaker will have 3 minutes to discuss what he/she has ranked #2 on the "Focusing on the Speaker" sheet.

   C. Each listener will have the same responsibilities that are listed above under 3C.

6. The facilitator leads the following discussion:

   A. What were the positive/negative aspects of being the speaker?

   B. What were the positive/negative aspects of being the listener?

   C. In what attending behaviors did listeners engage? What effect(s) did these attending behaviors have on the speakers?

   D. What internal and external distractions interfered with each listener's ability to concentrate totally on the speaker?

   E. How difficult was it for each listener not to focus the topic of the discussion on him/herself?

   F. How did this exercise help increase each listener's awareness of the importance of possessing an other-oriented listening attitude?

Adapted from V.T. Katz, A.M. Katz, and J. Huntley, "Empathic Listening: A Basic Communication Skill" (Paper presented at the First Annual International Listening Association Convention, Atlanta, Georgia, Febuary 19, 1980).

FOCUSING ON THE SPEAKER

RANK ORDER THE FOLLOWING FIVE QUESTIONS ACCORDING TO HOW WILLING YOU WOULD BE TO DISCUSS THEM WITH A STRANGER. WHAT YOU RANK #1 IS THE ONE YOU WOULD BE MOST WILLING TO SHARE, AND WHAT YOU RANK #5 IS THE ONE YOU WOULD BE LEAST WILLING TO SHARE. USE ALL NUMBERS FROM 1 TO 5.

_____WHAT ARE THE SOCIAL ISSUES ABOUT WHICH YOU FEEL MOST STRONGLY AND WHY?

_____WHAT ARE YOUR MAJOR STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES?

_____HOW DO YOU SPEND YOUR LEISURE AND/OR VACATION TIME?

_____WHO HAVE BEEN THE MOST IMPORTANT PEOPLE IN YOUR LIFE?

_____WHAT ASPECTS ABOUT A PERSON IMPRESS YOU THE MOST?

THE EFFECTS OF INTERRUPTING

PURPOSE: TO INCREASE EACH LISTENER'S AWARENESS OF THE DISRESPECTFUL LISTENING ATTITUDE THAT THE ACT OF INTERRUPTING REFLECTS

PROCEDURE:

1. PARTICIPANTS FORM DYADS WITH EACH DYAD CONSISTING OF A MALE AND A FEMALE MEMBER (WHENEVER POSSIBLE).
2. THE FACILITATOR EXPLAINS THE ACTIVITY.
   A. EACH MALE PARTNER IS TO SERVE AS SPEAKER; HE WILL HAVE 2 MINUTES TO DISCUSS A PERSONAL OR PROFESSIONAL CONCERN ABOUT WHICH HE HAS SERIOUS THOUGHTS AND STRONG FEELINGS. REGARDLESS OF WHAT HIS PARTNER SAYS OR DOES, HE SHOULD TRY TO CONTINUE SPEAKING.
   B. EACH FEMALE PARTNER IS TO SERVE AS INTERRUPTER; SHE IS TO ENGAGE IN EVERY IMAGINABLE STRATEGY FOR INTERRUPTING BY INTERJECTING HER OWN OBSERVATIONS ABOUT THE TOPIC OF DISCUSSION, BY CHANGING THE TOPIC OF DISCUSSION, ETC.

   *WHENEVER CONDITIONS NECESSITATE THAT THE DYAD PARTNERS BE OF THE SAME SEX, THE PARTNER WITH THE LONGER (OR MORE) HAIR WILL SERVE AS THE INTERRUPTER.
3. THE FACILITATOR STOPS THE DISCUSSION AFTER 2 MINUTES.
4. THE FACILITATOR LEADS THE FOLLOWING DISCUSSION:
   A. WHAT WERE THE SPEAKERS' REACTIONS TO BEING INTERRUPTED?
   B. HOW DID THE SPEAKERS FEEL ABOUT BEING INTERRUPTED?
   C. HOW DID THOSE WHO SERVED AS INTERRUPTERS FEEL ABOUT INTERRUPTING?
   D. WHAT ATTITUDINAL MESSAGES DOES THE ACT OF INTERRUPTING SEND TO A SPEAKER?

ADAPTED FROM A.R. ZIMMERMAN, "LISTENING AND SELF-ESTEEM: PROFESSIONAL AND NON-PROFESSIONAL DIFFERENCES, MALE AND FEMALE APPLICATION" (PAPER PRESENTED AT THE SIXTH ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL LISTENING ASSOCIATION CONVENTION, ORLANDO, FLORIDA, MARCH 15, 1985).